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A RECREATION
DEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN
FOR
AGUIRRE SPRING AND
VICINITY



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide a document which will give immediate and long-range guidance and direction to the recreation development program, specifically for the Aguirre Spring Development Area; but, also, in a general way, for the Northern part of the Organ Mountains. It is assumed that a Recreation Lands Plan will be prepared for the entire Organ Mountain Range sometime in the future, which will deal more directly with the Recreation Management needs for this area.

OBJECTIVES

-The plan shall provide a recreation development program which is: (1) responsive to the capability of the resources to support recreation use; and, (2) responsive to the needs of the people who are potential users of these resources.
-The plan shall provide for a wide range of outdoor recreation use opportunities including: sightseeing, hiking, camping, picnicking, nature study, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and other compatible recreation uses. Emphasis shall be placed on providing a micro-wilderness experience within the Organ Mountain Natural Area.
-The plan shall be coordinated with other resource programs, both existing and proposed, including: mineral production, livestock grazing, wildlife development, commercial development, occupancy, watershed protection, and other programs.
-The plan shall project long-range recreation development needs based on available information with the understanding that the plan will be updated as new information and technology becomes available.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Scenery - The scenic resource is the primary recreation attraction in the Organ Mountains. Of particular significance are the high mountain peaks and the higher elevations of the eastern slopes, which are quite densely covered with conifers and deciduous trees and shrubs. The interesting rock formations and the variety of vegetation in the canyons also represent an important scenic resource. The western slopes are interestingly rugged; but, the lack of variety in vegetation (size, color, contrast, etc.) tend to make it much less scenic than the canyons and the eastern slopes.

Wildlife - This area has had restricted deer hunting for several years; and, presently supports a sizeable resident deer population. Big-horn sheep drift into this area occasionally from the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge. Other wildlife species of special significance which frequent this area includes: mountain lion, bobcat, grey fox, squirrel (tree and ground species), chipmunk, porcupine, rabbits, quail, dove, and a variety of non-game birds. Hunting and wildlife observations are important recreation uses in this area.

Cultural Features and Events - There are several historic features and events which warrant consideration in future development programs for this area. The information on these historic values is sketchy and needs additional investigation to determine their authenticity and relative importance. Historic features which are of importance include:

- the old trail over Baylor Pass;
- the old road over San Augustine Pass;
- the old mining town of Organ; and
- the old Aguirre Spring Homestead

Events which are important are: (1) the running battle which occurred between the Union and Confederate forces during the Civil War period; and (2) the Indian battles which reportedly occurred in the area.

Geologic Features - The Organ Mountains are a resultant of rift faulting along the Rio-Grande Valley and the accompanying uplifting which exposed the tertiary volcanic rocks. The rugged, bare-faced peaks, which were formed by this action, are the focal points of the scenic values in the area. Specific features which are of special importance include: Sugarloaf Peak, the Needles, Rabbit Ears, and Baylor Peak. The rugged, rock formations which completely saturate the area add much to the scenic values, but create serious construction problems for road, campground, and other similar developments.

Climate - One of the important attractions in the Organ Mountains is the temperature relief that it provides. The western slopes provide very comfortable temperatures during the early spring and late fall months, and the Aguirre Spring area provides considerable relief from the hot, valley temperatures during the summer months -- especially during the late afternoon and evening when the high peaks provide shade.

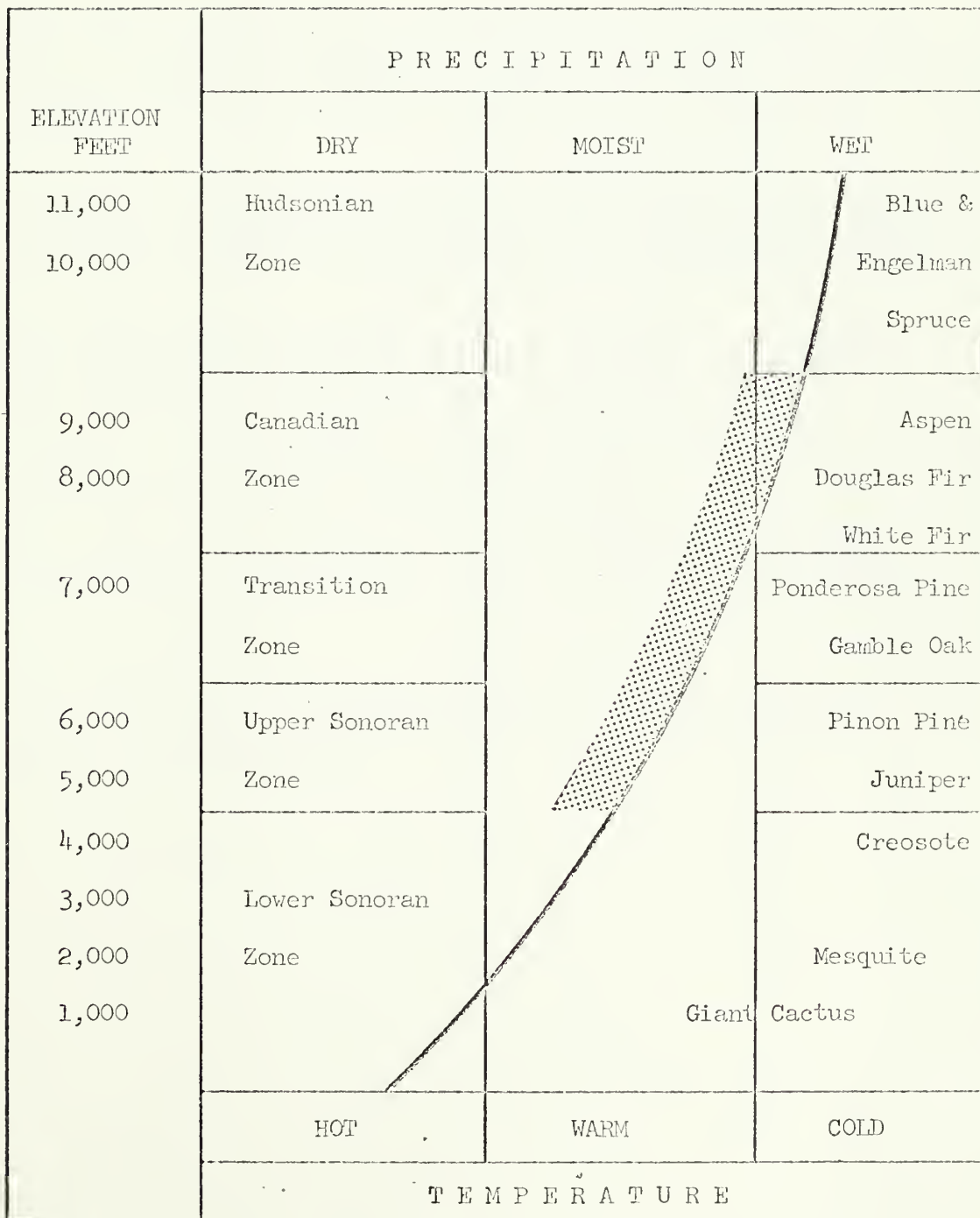
The area is classed as semi-arid with more than half of the annual precipitation (8-10 inches) normally occurring during July, August, and September. Sunshine can be expected 80 to 90 percent of the time with the winter season being particularly clear and sunny. Winters are mild with daytime temperatures ranging between 50° and 60°. The daytime temperatures in the summer range between 90-108° in the valleys with a daily temperature differential which generally exceeds 30°. Winds are usually light. Late winter and spring are the windiest with occasional gusts up to 25 to 30 miles per hour which results in some dust storms.

Water - Water is an extremely scarce resource in this area. There are several seasonal springs but no permanent streams or ponds. Groundwater is available at reasonable drilling depths in the surrounding valleys, but is not available within the mountain range. To get water to the recreation sites would require a very expensive piping and pumping system.

Natural Area Values - The mountain area above elevation 5,500 is practically in a pristine condition except for a few old fences. This area provides an excellent opportunity to preserve a natural environment and to provide a wilderness experience for the visitor.

Ecologic Features - One of the unique features of this area is its ecology. There are four life zones represented in the area including: the Lower Sonoran Zone, the Upper Sonoran Zone, the Transition Zone, and the Canadian Zone (see the Life Zone and Vegetation Chart on next page).

LIFE ZONES AND VEGETATION



ORGAN MOUNTAIN AREA

CONCLUSION - RESOURCES

-The recreation resources of the Organ Mountains provide excellent opportunities for recreation use. Uses for which the resources are especially well-suited are: hiking, nature study, picnicking, camping, sightseeing, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and hunting.
-The major recreation attractions of the mountains are: (1) the grandeur of the rugged peaks; (2) the scenic beauty of the densely vegetated east slopes and canyons; and (3) the temperature relief the mountains provide from the heat of the valleys.
-The excellent state of preservation of the natural environment within the mountains provides unusual opportunity to interpret the ecosystems for both the amateur and the professional.
-The area surrounding Aguirre Spring provides, by far, the greatest opportunity for development and use.
-The canyons along the west slope provide adequate opportunities for recreation site development which would cater to early spring and late fall use.
-Water is not available at the recreation sites.
-The delicate ecological communities of this desert environment will be drastically damaged if recreation use isn't carefully regulated and controlled.

V I S I T O R U S E A N A L Y S I S

Existing Visitor-Use Information - The information available on existing visitor-use is based on casual observations by district personnel, and, consequently, only broad generalizations can be made concerning the type and amount of use that is actually occurring in the area. The peak use period is on weekend days during the spring and fall seasons. During these periods, daily peaks of between 150-200 have been observed. The major activities the visitors participate in are sightseeing, hiking, nature study, and picnicking. The vast majority of these visitors are from the Las Cruces area, but there seems to be a sizable influx from the El Paso area.

Factors Affecting Visitor-Use

Population - Within a two-hour driving time from this area, there is a total population in excess of 500,000 U. S. citizens, plus an additional 513,000 people in Juarez, Mexico. A partial breakdown of the population is as follows:

White Sands Missile Range Headquarters - This community has a population of from 9,000 to 10,000 people. Driving time to the Aguirre Spring site is about 10-15 minutes. Their work schedule constitutes an 8-hour day and 40-hour week. These people have few local ties and very few alternatives for use of their leisure time. Consequently, there is good reason to expect heavy use from this community when facilities are available in the Aguirre Spring area.

Las Cruces Area - There is a metropolitan population of near 55,000 in the Las Cruces area. This population is within 30-minutes driving time from the Aguirre Spring site and even closer to potential sites on the western slope.

El Paso - The El Paso metropolitan area has a population of 400,000 which is within a 60 to 90-minute drive of the Organ Mountain area.

Traffic Volume - There are two major highways which could have a significant influence on visitor-use in the Organ Mountains -- U. S. 70-82 which passes through the north end of the range, and Interstate 10 which passes to the west. Traffic volume on U. S. 70-82 averaged 3,950 vehicles per day in 1967 (source - New Mexico Traffic Survey - 1967). About one-fourth of this traffic is generated by workers at the Missile Range, but that still leaves an ADT of 3,000 which represents a sizable figure. No breakdown is available on passenger cars, out-of-state cars, etc. Traffic volume on I-10 exceeds an ADT of 7,000.

At a continuous recorder station near Deming, New Mexico, the following breakdown is given for the traffic on I-10:

Annual Average Daily Traffic	4,682
New Mexico Passenger Cars	7.9%
Out-of-State Passenger Cars	58.8%
Heavy Commercial	20.9%

It is reasonable to assume that a fairly high percentage of the out-of-state vehicles are tourists. This is especially true during the winter months when retired or semi-retired people vacate to the warm climates of the south.

Access - Except for U. S. 70-82, access to and through the Organs is very limited. There are several graded, dirt roads along the west slope, and, up until recently, just a jeep trail into the Aguirre Spring area. In the spring of 1969 a new 16-foot, single-lane road with turn-outs was completed into the Aguirre Spring site. It is anticipated that the use patterns will change drastically with this improved access into the Aguirre Spring area. The fact that there have been roads on the west slope which a normal touring car could traverse probably accounts for the heavier existing use in that area. Extensive coverage of rock outcroppings has discouraged off-highway vehicular use, and, consequently, there are very few jeep trails. There are no developed hiking or riding trails.

ALTERNATE OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities comparable to those available, or potentially available, in the Organs are very limited in this region. The nearest comparable areas are in the Lincoln and Gila National Forests which are 80 to 100 miles from either Las Cruces or El Paso. The Dona Ana Mountains have potential for recreation development but do not have comparable opportunities with the Aguirre Spring area in the Organs. There are limited opportunities for picnicking and hiking along the Rio Grande River and canal systems. The Caballo and Elephant Butte reservoirs offer excellent opportunities for water sports, fishing, and waterfowl hunting. The big tourist attractions in the region are Carlsbad Cavern National Park, White Sands National Monument, and Juarez, Mexico.

It is unlikely that facility development in the Organ Mountains would compete with any of the alternate opportunities mentioned above.

CONCLUSIONS - VISITOR USE

-The Organ Mountains will primarily be a day-use area with the vast majority of the users coming from the nearby communities.
-There is a great need for day-use facilities to satisfy a year-round, recreation program in the vicinity of the Organ Mountains.
-The western slopes offer an excellent opportunity to satisfy the need for early spring, late fall, and winter use. Use in this area will increase at a moderate pace. Facility development should be modest but consistent.
-The greatest unfilled need at present is a close-in, day-use area which will provide interesting surroundings and temperature relief during the hot summer season. The only available area that comes near to fitting this need is the Aguirre Spring area. The potential for visitor-use in the Aguirre Spring area is so great that it is likely that serious resource damage will result if visitor-use isn't regulated through careful and timely development and management. It is anticipated that public response to development in this area will be immediate, and, consequently, this area should have top priority for funding.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Development Objective - The Organ Mountain area shall be developed primarily as a day-use area. Overnight facilities will be kept at a minimum. Intensive-use sites shall be located on the exterior of the Natural Area; and, shall be designed and built so that a restoration system can be implemented to balance the use and provide adequate resource protection. Development within the Natural Area shall be limited to those facilities necessary to provide a semi-wilderness experience for the visitor and facilities necessary for protection of the natural resources.

Architectural Requirements - Guidelines to be followed in designing, locating and constructing structures are:

The color and form of the structures are to harmonize with the natural environment. The emphasis is on preserving the natural environment--not showing off architectural achievements.

Emphasis shall be placed on use of native materials; i.e., rock, wood, etc. However, metal, plastic, and other such materials may be used providing they harmonize with the natural environment.

Structures which have low-maintenance costs and are resistant to vandalism shall be given priority.

Circulation System - The circulation system is the key to the effective use and protection of the recreation resources in the Organ Mountain area. The plan provides for vehicular access to key locations adjacent to the Natural Area, and provides for foot and horse access within the Natural Area. No vehicular traffic is allowed in the Natural Area. The proposed road and trail locations shown on the development drawing are schematic and may be changed to satisfy engineering needs, but every effort should be made to conform as nearly as possible to proposed alignment.

Roads - There are four roads planned for this area including: (1) Organ Mountain East Road, (2) Organ West Road, (3) Baylor Canyon Road, and (4) White Sands Road (tentative). The purpose of these roads is to provide access to points where the visitor can picnic, camp, hike, or otherwise enjoy the natural environment of the Organ Mountains.

The Organ Mountain East Road is the principal road. The initial development of this road was completed in early 1969. The present single-lane road will be expanded and extended as the need arises. Segment "A" of the Organ Mountain East Road will be expanded to a 24-foot, double-lane road and segment "B" will be extended to complete a single-lane loop. The entire road will eventually be asphalt-surfaced.

The Organ West Road provides access to the many scenic canyons along the west slope and connects with existing roads to form an interesting loop drive. It is anticipated that this road will receive heavy use during the early spring and late fall by sightseers, picnickers, and people just out for a Sunday outing.

The Baylor Canyon Road is a short, side road which provides access to the Baylor Canyon Picnic Site and Trailhead.

The White Sands Road is needed to connect the White Sands Missile Range Headquarters with the Aguirre Spring developments. The initiative to complete this road rests with the military.

Trails - The major visitor attraction in the Organ Mountains is the natural beauty of the area. To fully enjoy this beauty it is essential that access be provided into the more scenic areas. The trail system is designed to do just that. The trail system is also designed to accommodate visitors of varied interests and abilities. The trails are schematically located on the accompanying drawing. The exact location of the trails will be determined on the ground at the time they are entered in the program cycle for funding. Horse use is limited to the Baylor Pass Trail. Trail bikes or powered vehicles will not be allowed on any of the trails.

Three trailheads are provided as part of the trail system. The trailheads at both ends of the Baylor Pass Trail will provide facilities for horses; while the trailhead servicing the foot trails south of Aguirre Spring is designed to accommodate hikers only. The trailhead for the foot trails is the focal point in the Aguirre Spring Development Area for dispensing information and providing interpretation. The key facility at this site is the information-interpretive exhibit. It should be placed in a commanding position and should be highly descriptive to insure that the visitor gets the necessary information he needs before he begins his trek.

The Baylor Pass Trail fulfills a need for a horseback trail, and it also provides an excellent opportunity for point-to-point hiking by families, Boy Scouts, etc. The trail mixes excellent scenery with a taste of the old pioneer days. The trail follows the remnant of the old Baylor Pass Trail. The grades are easy and the risks for novice horseback riders are few. A small riding stable in the vicinity of Baylor Canyon Picnic Site provides horseback trips up Baylor Canyon. The trail, for the most part, is well-established and could be fully developed with a minimum of effort and costs.

A nature trail stressing the ecology of the area is proposed in the vicinity of the Aguirre Spring Campground, but is not shown on the drawing. The exact location of the trail is to be determined at the same time the design is finalized for the Aguirre Spring Campground. It is anticipated that the nature trail will receive very heavy use, and, consequently, will require hard surfacing and careful use of natural boundaries to preserve the natural environment.

The Pine Tree Trail provides short hiking opportunities into the higher elevations where the visitor has excellent views of the surrounding country and a more intimate view of the Needles and Sugarloaf Peak. The trail also provides a jumping-off point for mountain climbers who frequently scale the peaks of the Needles. It also provides access to the primitive campground and is the first leg of Sugarloaf Trail. It is anticipated that the Pine Tree Trail will be the most heavily-used trail in the area. It is important that this trail be carefully laid out, designed, and constructed to strict engineering specifications.

The Indian Hollow Trail passes through the lower slopes. It has gentle grades, and, consequently, will provide hiking opportunities for those who are not capable of hiking the more rugged trails. It is anticipated that this trail will receive very heavy use during the spring and fall months, when the temperatures at the higher elevations are on the cool side. Part of the trail serves as a connector between the three major recreation sites; and, it also serves as the final leg of the Sugarloaf Trail. This trail will require grading and surfacing to strict engineering specifications.

The Sugarloaf Trail is designed to accommodate the wilderness enthusiast. It is anticipated that use on this trail will be much less than on the other trails, but this, in itself, will contribute to the wilderness experience that this trail is intended to create. The trail will be well-marked and well-defined but grading will be kept to a minimum and surfacing should not be necessary.

Utility Systems

Water System - Water for drinking will not be provided at the intensive-use sites. People customarily carry their own water in this arid country and it is anticipated that dry campgrounds and picnic grounds will present no problems.

Garbage and Refuse - The garbage and refuse will be hauled to the nearest public dump.

Sewage Systems - Toilet facilities at the intensive-use sites will be vault type. The effluent will be pumped out and hauled to the nearest sewage disposal facility. Pit-type toilets will be installed at the primitive campground and at other locations along the trail systems based on need.

Power System - Electrical power will not be provided at any of the intensive-use sites.

Telephone System - No telephone service will be provided at any of the intensive-use sites.

Radio System - All staff vehicles will be equipped with radio equipment. The radio system will operate in the district net.

AGUIRRE SPRING DEVELOPMENT AREA

The area surrounding Aguirre Spring presents the best opportunity for development and use presently available in the Organ Mountains. In this area opportunities will be provided for camping, picnicking, hiking, nature study, and associated activities. The general development drawing shows the location of the various types of recreation-use sites and facilities. The amount of facilities shown for each site is based on rough estimates of the capabilities of the site, and, consequently, should not be considered as absolute. The exact amount of facilities will be determined at the time the site plan is completed. Shelters shall be provided for all camp and picnic units. All camp units shall have fire circles and firewood shall be provided at a central pickup point. All picnic units shall be provided with an upright charcoal grill. Gathering of firewood is prohibited except in the vicinity of the primitive camp, and this may have to be curtailed if over use occurs. All the interior trails within each site, except the primitive campground, will be paved or otherwise surfaced with a durable, long-wearing material. All locations receiving intensive use such as around toilets, picnic tables, etc. will be surfaced with a suitable material. All construction will give preference to vandal-resistant materials and design. This is particularly important because of the proximity of this area to local communities and the resultant vandalism that frequently occurs in this type of situation.

Aguirre Spring Campground (#1) - This is one of the best development sites available in the Organ Mountains both from a point of view of location and the physical amenities of the site. Picnicking and camping will be allowed on the site initially. It may be necessary to segregate the two uses if serious conflicts develop. If day use becomes as heavy as predicted, it may be necessary to exclude camping completely. Aguirre Spring is too small and too seasonal to provide adequate water for the size development proposed for this area. Consequently, no attempt will be made to develop the spring for human consumption. Consideration will be given to piping the spring water out of the area for livestock and wildlife use.

Group Picnic Site (#1) - This site will be developed for group picnicking purposes. The site was chosen for group development for the following reasons: (1) it is relatively flat and provides adequate opportunities for group play areas which are desirable in group-use sites; (2) it is geographically separated from the family picnic and camp sites which provides a good buffer from the noise and turmoil which is characteristic in group-use areas; (3) it has excellent access; and (4) it otherwise has the amenities which constitute a good group-use area.

The site is to be designed for a high degree of flexibility. The design should anticipate groups from 30 to 150 people varying from the aged to youth groups. The group picnic units are to be handled on a reservation basis. The site plan should provide a system for separate control and management of each group area. Units not reserved will be left open on a first-come, first-served basis to either groups or individuals.

Family Picnic Sites (#2 & #3) - Picnicking, with associated activities, will be the primary recreation use of these sites. Both sites have all the physical amenities necessary for picnic development. Site #2 is more ideally located in that it is adjacent to the trailhead and the trail system. These two sites will be developed on a cluster basis with a density of up to 10 units per acre. Each cluster shall have a minimum of 10 units, which is the minimum economic size to support a toilet facility.

Primitive Campground (#5) - This site is established to provide wilderness-like camping opportunities for groups or individuals who desire to enjoy the backcountry. Facilities are restricted to two pit toilets and two rustic fire circles. No garbage collection facilities will be furnished. Visitors will be encouraged to pack out what they pack in. Group camping in this area will be controlled through a permit system.

Trailheads - (See Section on Trail Systems).

Trailside Stop - This small wayside development is designed to accomplish three objectives: (1) to provide the visitors shelter from the elements; (2) to dispense information on the use of the trails; and, (3) to provide an interpretive message on the geology of Sugarloaf Peak. The shelter should be large enough to accommodate twenty people. It should be of rustic construction (see Section on Architectural Requirements) and should be placed so as not to be silhouetted on the ridgeline but still have a good view of Sugarloaf Peak.

Overlooks - There are several overlooks proposed along the trails. These overlooks will be equipped with simple view-finder devices which will point out and name the interesting features that can be viewed from that point.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Baylor Canyon Picnic Site - This site is designed to provide picnic facilities and to provide a jumping-off point for hikers and horseback riders using the Baylor Pass Trail. The facilities at this site should be kept simple and well dispersed.

Baylor Pass Wayside - This small wayside provides shelter from the elements for the visitor and also provides a facility where the history of the area can be told.

San Augustine Pass Wayside - This wayside has been partially developed by the State Highway Department and the White Sands Proving Ground. This plan provides for developing additional facilities west of the existing ones. The primary purposes of these facilities are: (1) to introduce the visitor to the recreation opportunities available in the Organ Mountains; (2) to interpret the geology and ecology of the Organ Mountain Natural Area.

Information Station - The purpose of this station is to provide the visitor with the essential information before he drives all the way in to the Aguirre Spring area. This station will include a turn-out, an information exhibit, and a turn-around. The exhibit will be oriented so that it can be read from the car. The turn-out should be long enough to accommodate six to eight cars. The turn-around will have a turning radius large enough to accommodate cars towing trailers.

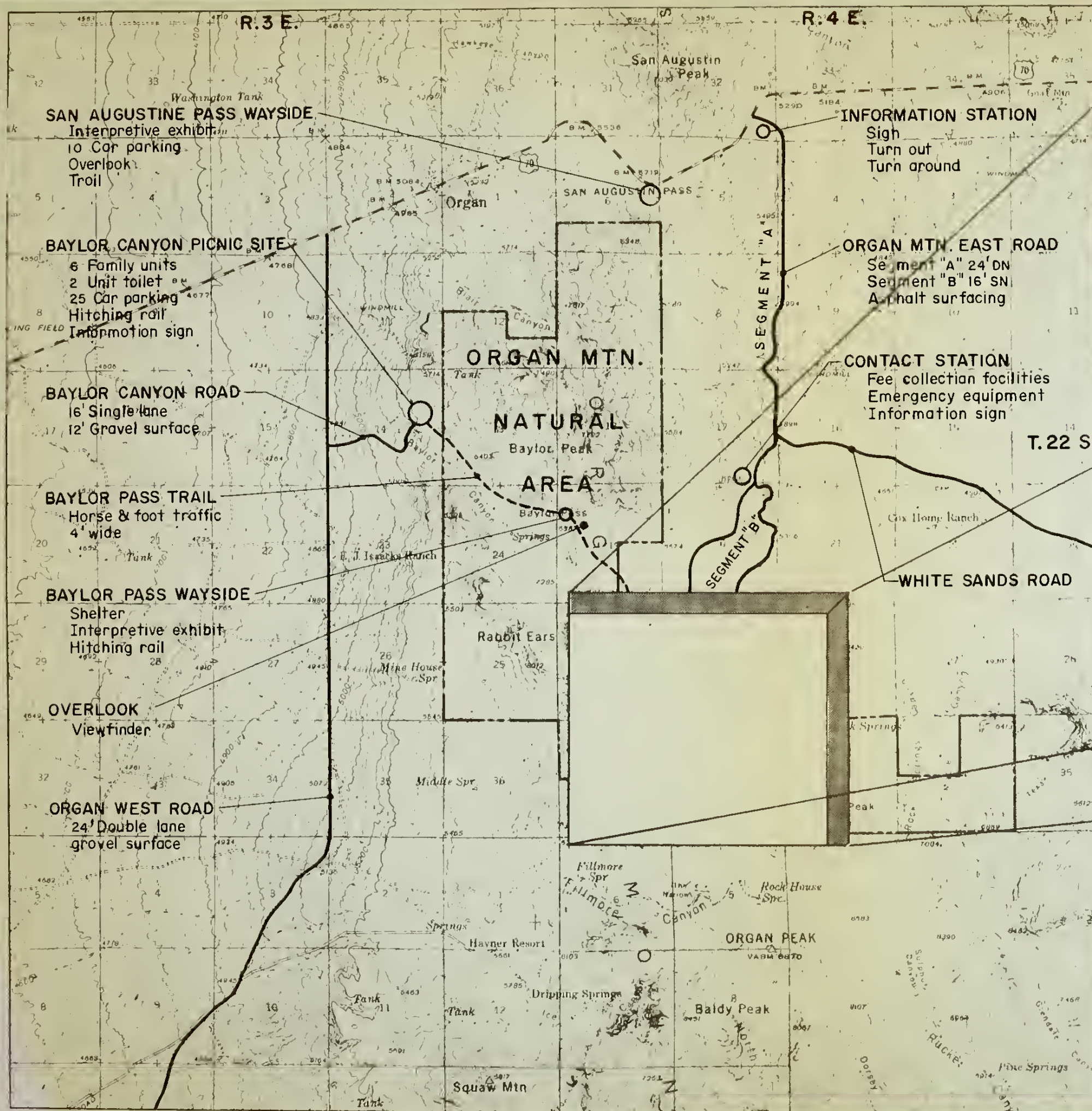
Contact Station - The purpose of this station is to provide administrative control over the use in the Aguirre Spring area. All visitors will be checked through this station. The station will be manned during the peak-use periods and will be designed so that essential information can be dispersed during unmanned periods. It may serve as a fee-collection station. It will be equipped with emergency equipment such as first-aid, fire, search-and-rescue equipment, etc.

D E V E L O P M E N T S C H E D U L E

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>PHASE I</u>	<u>PHASE II</u>	<u>PHASE III</u>
ORGAN MOUNTAIN EAST ROAD	Complete S&D and construct the following: widen segment "A" to 24' DN; complete segment "B" to 16' SN standards; surface entire road with gravel. Design and development is to include the entrances, exits, turn arounds, and parking for the information station and contact station.	Asphalt surface the entire road.	
ORGAN WEST ROAD	Construct a 24' DN road beginning at the intersection with US-70 and terminating at county road in the NW 1/4 of Sec. 10 T235 R3E. Surface with gravel.	Complete the S&D work for the remaining portion of the road using the same stan- dards as outlined in the initial phase.	Complete construction work on the remaining portion of the road system.
BAYLOR CANYON ROAD	Construct a 16' SN road and surface with gravel.		
AGUIRRE SPRING CAMPGROUND (No. 4) (30 units)	Complete S&D and construct all facilities including the nature trail.		
GROUP PICNIC SITE (No. 1) (25 units)	Complete S&D work for entire site. Con- struct one group unit with associated facilities.	Construct entire site.	
FAMILY PICNIC SITE (No. 2) (50 units)		Complete S&D work for entire site.	Construct entire site.
FAMILY PICNIC SITE (No. 3) (20 units)		Complete S&D work for entire site.	Construct entire site.
PRIMITIVE CAMP (No. 5)		Complete S&D and construct.	

DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE CONTINUED

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>PHASE I</u>	<u>PHASE II</u>	<u>PHASE III</u>
BAYLOR CANYON PICNIC SITE (6 units)	Complete S&D work for entire site and construct		
SAN AUGUSTINE PASS WAYSIDE		Complete S&D work for entire site.	Construct entire site.
AGUIRRE SPRING CONTACT STATION		Complete S&D work and construct.	
PINE TREE TRAIL	Complete S&D work and construct - including the trailhead facilities.		
INDIAN HOLLOW TRAIL	Complete S&D and construct.		
SUGAR LOAF TRAIL		Complete S&D and construct - including the overlook facilities.	
BAYLOR PASS TRAIL	Complete S&D and construct the entire trail including the trailhead facilities.		
BAYLOR PASS WAYSIDE SHELTER	Complete S&D and construct.		



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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

A
RECREATION DEVELOPMENT
AREA PLAN
FOR
AGUIRRE SPRING AND VICINITY

UPDATED

NAME DATE

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Area Manager

RECOMM. _____
District Manager

APPROVED _____
State Director

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